

## Taking That First Step

### It's easy to start a walking program.

**From shopping malls to nature trails and treadmills**, millions of Americans enjoy the health benefits of regular walking, the easiest exercise.

**Are you a would-be walker?** Here's a 5-step plan to get you in the habit:

- 1) Warm up your muscles** for 5-10 minutes by gradually increasing your walking pace.
- 2) Wear comfortable clothing** and supportive shoes designed for walking or running.
- 3) Stay aware** – avoid distractions such as phone chat and listening to music. Walk in well-lit, safe, populated areas.
- 4) When you don't feel like exercising? Think of ways to get going again** – such as walking with a friend or walking in a mall during bad weather.
- 5) Take the write step.** Record distance, time and how often you walk to follow your progress – and enjoy the results.

**Doctor approval?** Get your health care provider's okay if you have medical issues such as chronic backache, arthritis or hypertension, or before significantly increasing your physical activity.

## Step Into A Walking Routine

Warm-up Time	Fast-walk Time	Cool-down Time	Total Time
<b>WEEK 1</b>			
Walk slowly 5 minutes	Walk briskly 5 minutes	Walk slowly 5 minutes	15 minutes
<b>WEEK 2</b>			
Walk slowly 5 minutes	Walk briskly 8 minutes	Walk slowly 5 minutes	18 minutes
<b>WEEK 3</b>			
Walk slowly 5 minutes	Walk briskly 11 minutes	Walk slowly 5 minutes	21 minutes
<b>WEEK 4-plus</b>	Add 3-5 fast minutes each week until you reach 40 minutes.		

Source: WIN/NIDDK, [win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/walking.htm#firststep](http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/walking.htm#firststep).

**Pace yourself.** Remember, your body isn't used to regular physical activity. Start with the NIH's walking program below, based on walking 3 times a week. If you walk fewer times a week, allow more than a week before increasing your pace and frequency.

Sources:

"Walking: A Step in the Right Direction." WIN/NIDDK, 3/07. Accessed 12/11/07 at [win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/walking.htm#firststep](http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/walking.htm#firststep).

Active Living. Province of Ontario. Accessed 8/4/08 at <http://www.active2010.ca/>.

[Cutline]

**Did you know ...** more than half of your muscles are designed for walking.

#### BEST BITS

**American Diabetes Alert Day is March 24.** More than 23 million adults and children have diabetes, and one quarter of them don't know they have it. The American Diabetes Association encourages you to take their Diabetes Risk Test at [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).

Source:

"Consideration of Policy Options for Use of Pneumococcal Vaccines." CDC, 10-22-23/08. Accessed 11/10/08 at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/ACIP/downloads/mtg-slides-oct08/03-1-pneu.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/ACIP/downloads/mtg-slides-oct08/03-1-pneu.pdf).

**Studies show that smokers are 4 times more likely** than nonsmokers to suffer from pneumococcal disease, which includes bacterial pneumonia and meningitis. So last fall the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommended the pneumococcal vaccine for smokers ages 19-64. Previously this vaccine was advised only for people age 65-plus or with chronic conditions – regardless of whether they smoke – since they are at higher risk for illness or death from pneumococcal diseases.

Source: Michael J. Gaunt, PharmD. "Child-resistant Does Not Mean Childproof." Pharmacy Times, 5/07. Accessed 7/30/08 at [www.pharmacytimes.com/issues/articles/2007-05\\_4676.asp](http://www.pharmacytimes.com/issues/articles/2007-05_4676.asp).

**Child-resistant packaging is not always child-proof.** Products are judged child resistant when tests show 85% of children under 5 years old cannot open a package in 5 minutes (the other 15% can open it quickly). Why take chances? Keep household products and medications in their safety packaging or weekly pill planners, locked up and out of children's reach. Secure weekly pill planners too.

Source: "Sore Throat." Mayo Clinic, 9/27/08. Accessed 11/12/08 at [www.mayoclinic.com/health/sore-throat/DS00526/DSECTION=lifestyle-and-home-remedies](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sore-throat/DS00526/DSECTION=lifestyle-and-home-remedies).

[Page 2]

#### SPECIAL REPORT

#### QUIZ: Nutrition Pop Quiz

**March launches National Nutrition Month** – a good time to assess your eating habits: what's good, what's missing, or what might be adding unwanted weight. Set some personal nutrition goals, such as adding at least one more fruit and vegetable per day, watching beverage calories, and limiting fried foods.

Have fun with the quiz – it targets some nutrition myths typical in our age of infomercials and misleading media bites. Always get your advice from the experts, including the American Dietetic Association (ADA), your health care providers, and this newsletter.

**1. Margarine has fewer calories than butter.**

☐ Fact ☐ Fiction

**2. If you eat more calories than your body uses, they will be stored as fat.**

☐ Fact ☐ Fiction

**3. For best health, be sure all the foods you eat are low in fat.**

☐ Fact ☐ Fiction

**4. Snacking may keep you from overeating at meal times.**

☐ Fact ☐ Fiction

**5. Eating excess carbohydrates causes weight gain**

☐ Fact ☐ Fiction

**6. Truly whole-grain foods have the word whole listed as the first ingredient on the label.**

☐ Fact ☐ Fiction

**7. The average American gets about 15% of calories from beverages.**

☐ Fact ☐ Fiction

## ANSWERS

1. *Fiction* – Regular margarine and butter each have about 36 calories per teaspoon. Instead, choose healthier vegetable spreads or liquids, which are lighter in fat than margarine and butter. **Best:** Products labeled “light” (for less fat and fewer calories) and “no trans fat” (to avoid partially hydrogenated oils).

2. *Fact* – In theory, losing one pound requires a deficit of 3,500 calories – if you ate 500 fewer calories per day you’d lose a pound a week. However, every “body” is different, so your weight loss may vary from week to week.

3. *Fiction* – You can balance high-fat and low-fat foods and still eat well, provided you keep total daily fat intake within 20%-35% of calories. **Best:** Avoid trans fats and a high intake of saturated fat-rich foods.

4. *Fact* – Healthful snacks can provide sustained energy so you’ll be less likely to overeat at your next meal. **Best:** Choose snacks that fill nutritional gaps.

5. *Fiction* – Consume too many calories from any source – carbohydrate, protein, fat – combined with inactivity, and you are more likely to gain weight. **Best:** Keep meals balanced for successful, long-term weight control.

6. *Fact* – Foods labeled *wheat flour* or *enriched wheat* are made with refined (white) flour and lack the bran and germ that supply valuable nutrients and fiber found in whole-grain products. Instead, choose products that list *whole wheat*, *whole rye* or *whole oats*.

7. *Fiction* – Beverages, including coffee, milk and regular soft drinks, supply nearly a quarter of our dietary calories. **Best:** skim milk, pure fruit juices, and water.

[Cutline]

While it's not always easy to eat better, better eating goals will serve you well, given time, a little planning and attention.

Sources:

"Clearing Up Calorie Confusion." Nutrition Fact Sheet, American Dietetic Association, 2004. "[Nutrition Quiz](http://eatright.org)." eatright.org, American Dietetic Association. Accessed 11/13/08.

Personal Best Archive, 2007-2008.

**GOAL LINE: Walking too routine?** Pick new, interesting routes through parks or past gardens, historic sites or waterways.

[Page 3]

FITNESS

## **Bone-Building Moves**

**The key to keeping bones strong** is regular weight-bearing activity. That's any movement that causes you to move against gravity while you're upright. The force helps your bones stay strong and dense. The more bone-strengthening activities you do at any age, the better your chances of warding off bone loss (osteoporosis).

### **Guidelines from the Osteoporosis Foundation:**

**1. Frequency** – Perform bone-building exercises 30 minutes a day most days of the week. If time is a factor, break the 30 minutes into 10- or 15-minute bits.

**2. Intensity** – High-impact weight-bearing activities include hiking, dancing, jogging, stair climbing, backpacking or tennis. Low-impact, less intense options include elliptical training, yoga, tai chi, walking, and gardening.

**3. Strength-building** – Build muscle by using resistance from your weight, dumbbells, bands, Pilates or other activities that work your muscles. Aim for 2 or 3 weekly workouts.

Exercise each muscle group – shoulders, upper back, lower back, middle back, upper arms, forearms, chest, abdominals, calves, thighs, and hips. Alternate by working 4-6 muscle groups during each session.

**To avoid injury:** Start gradually, adding more time, weight or repetitions as you get stronger. **Important:** If you have a chronic condition, such as osteoporosis or heart disease, or you are prone to fractures or fall frequently, use extra caution or ask for help

from a trainer.

Consult your health care provider before starting regular muscle workouts.

[Cutline]

**Osteoporosis isn't just a woman's disease – guys need to take care of their bones too.**

**Sources:**

"Prevention – Exercise for Better Bones." 2008. Osteoporosis Foundation. Accessed on 10/28/08 at <http://www.nof.org/prevention/exercise.htm>.

"6 Exercises to Help Build Bone Strength and Help Prevent Osteoporosis." 6/6/08. Johns Hopkins Health Alerts. Accessed on 10/28/08 at [http://www.johnshopkinshealthalerts.com/reports/back\\_pain\\_osteoporosis/2022-1.html](http://www.johnshopkinshealthalerts.com/reports/back_pain_osteoporosis/2022-1.html).

**Are You Weight-Loss Ready?**

**People choose to lose weight to gain something – better health, self-esteem or energy.**

The Partnership for Healthy Weight Management says setting sensible weight loss goals increases your chances of success.

What's "sensible" weight loss? Base your weight loss program on several factors: positive eating habits, more physical activity, mental attitude, age and any chronic problems.

**The American Dietetic Association says the most successful weight loss comes from setting real, practical goals.** To prepare yourself, think about how and why you want to lose weight. **Check all that apply to you:**

- ☐ I have a medical condition such as diabetes, arthritis or high cholesterol that could improve if I lose weight.
- ☐ I suffer from anxiety, low self-esteem or depression.
- ☐ Losing weight will give me the confidence and energy to be more socially and physically active.
- ☐ My biggest obstacle to losing weight is \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ I am inspired to lose weight by \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ My goals (timeline, amount of weight to lose) are realistic.
- ☐ I am making lifestyle changes that I can maintain to aid my weight loss goal.
- ☐ I accept that weight management is long-term, rather than a quick fix.
- ☐ I have a support network that will encourage me throughout my program.

Discuss your plan with your provider, especially if you have health conditions that may affect your ability to reach your goal. Weight loss usually means altering your lifestyle. New habits take time and patience but you can enjoy the benefits of better health along the way.

[Page 4]

WORK & FAMILY

## Break The Busy-Ness Habit ... with Time-Saving Tricks

**Feeling overwhelmed?** It's a common thread in the hectic fabric of American life. But are you as busy as you think you are? Or do you just need to manage your time better?

We tend to fill every moment of our time, which can build stress and reduce our focus at home and at work. If this describes your life, it's time to take a deep breath, stop and simplify.

You can never add hours to the day, but you can wisely use the 24 you have. Challenge yourself to become a time manager:

- **Identify what's important.** List your activities for the coming week, month and year. Only take on tasks that further your priorities.
- **Share the load.** *Examples:* If you're planning a dinner party, make it a potluck. Hire a high school student to help with chores.
- **Cut back where you can.** Eliminate one item or activity per week. *Examples:* Combine errands to minimize trips – when you go to the post office, swing by the market on the way. And do you really need to watch so much TV or online videos?
- **Adjust what you can.** Break large tasks down into manageable chunks of time. You don't have to paint the living room and kitchen in one day.
- **Say “yes” to a balanced life** – by saying “no.” No one can make things perfect for everyone. Keep your own priorities in sight.
- **Tune out and take a break.** Turn off the phone, pager, PDA, TV, media player and laptop. Enjoy doing absolutely nothing now and then.
- **Forget perfection when adequate will do.** So what if you don't have a spotless house, or time to cook gourmet meals? If your family is happy and healthy, isn't that what counts?

## Top Time Wasters

### Which ones are stealing your time?

- Watching TV
- Texting and talking on the phone
- Surfing the Web
- Email
- Junk mail
- Searching for lost items
- Procrastination
- Waiting
- Inability to say “no”

### Source:

Personal Best Archives

## Make Gratitude Your Attitude at Work

**When was the last time you showed appreciation** to somebody on the job? Some folks get so busy they forget, even though they may feel grateful for the good work or extra effort of others. To express your gratitude and boost spirits at work try these “thank you” messages:

**Acknowledge others** – a co-worker, your boss, a teammate or a customer. Say, “If I haven’t said so recently, I appreciate the things you do for me.”

**Give positive feedback.** It’s easy to criticize. Today, why not praise someone for a special deed or task well done? Even better, tell that person’s supervisor, too.

**Always appreciate the effort** even when it falls short of expectations, and watch your language. Rather than use negative words such as “wrong,” “fault” or “problem” choose positive and constructive words whenever you can, such as “solution,” “right track,” or “progress.”

**Appreciate yourself.** Think back on the past year – what you learned, how you handled mistakes, and goals reached. Admire your successes.

**Write it down.** At the end of the day, write down what went right today. What are you thankful for? What positive feelings did your job give you today?

If you spend more time at work than almost anywhere else, make those hours rewarding – appreciate and celebrate the positive parts of your job, including people.

Source:

Personal Best Archives, 2008

[Page 5]

SELF CARE

### **Dental Hygiene, For Health’s Sake** *By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP*

**Unhealthy teeth and gums can lead to serious health risks.** Your body reacts to bacterial plaque in your mouth by producing toxins and inflammatory substances that can enter your bloodstream and inflame tissues far from your mouth.

**Research links periodontal disease with several disorders:**

**Cardiovascular disease.** People with gum disease have a higher risk of heart disease and stroke than those with healthy gums.

**Diabetes.** Poor dental hygiene may worsen blood sugar control in people with diabetes.

**Pneumonia.** Excess dental plaque raises your risk of pneumonia when your resistance is low – such as when you’re sick or recovering from surgery.

**Dementia.** Preliminary evidence links periodontal disease with an increased risk of age-related memory loss and dementia.

**Warning signs of gum disease:** bleeding when you brush your teeth, painful or swollen gums, loose teeth in adults, tooth loss, or persistent bad breath. If you notice these signs, promptly contact your dentist.

**Plaque prevention:** Brush twice a day; floss daily; and see your dentist at least once a year for regular checkups and cleaning. Also, eat a nutritious diet and avoid exposure to tobacco.

More Info

[American Dental Association](#)

#### Sources

“Periodontal disease.” *JAMA* 299 (2008): 598. “Tooth or consequences.” American Medical Association, American Medical News, 3/3/08: 33-34. R.T. Demmer, et al.

“Periodontal infections and cardiovascular disease.” *Journal of the American Dental Association* 137 (2006): 14S-20S.

**Autism affects 560,000 American youths**, according to the CDC. Now autism can be detected in infants as young as 3 months, more than a year earlier than in the past, with the use of eye-movement sensors. This test tracks the movements of a child’s gaze pattern; one sign of autism is trouble recognizing faces or understanding facial expressions. Early diagnosis is important since behavioral therapy is most effective when started as early as possible.

Source:

Jeremy Singer-Vine\_ "New ways to Diagnose Autism." The Wall Street Journal, 10/27/08. Accessed on 10/28/08 at [http://www.reporternews.com/news/2008/oct/27/no-headline---wsj--detecting\\_autism1724/](http://www.reporternews.com/news/2008/oct/27/no-headline---wsj--detecting_autism1724/).

## **Living With Congestive Heart Failure**

**Nearly 5 million people in the U.S.** live with *congestive heart failure* (CHF). Risk increases with age and occurs when the heart fails to pump properly. As a result, oxygen and nutrient flow is impaired and fluid can accumulate in your legs or your lungs.

A key sign of CHF is shortness of breath during physical activities or while lying down. Other symptoms include coughing, confusion, fatigue, sudden weight gain, and swelling of the ankles or legs.

Possible causes of the condition include coronary heart disease, prior heart attack, high blood pressure or thyroid disorders.

Medications and lifestyle changes can help control CHF symptoms. Here are 3 essential habits to help you preserve your health:

**Exercise regularly.** Increase physical activity gradually and with your provider’s advice. Exercise can help your heart pump more efficiently and improve your endurance.

**Eat nutritiously.** Consume a low-fat diet containing lots of fruits and vegetables. Limit or avoid alcohol, which interferes with the heart’s ability to pump blood. Lose weight if you’re overweight. And cut back on salt.



**Educate yourself.** Work closely with your health care team to learn about your condition. Ask about your medications and which side effects to report. Get help managing contributing conditions such as stress, nicotine addiction, diabetes, excess weight, high blood pressure and cholesterol.

More Info

American Heart Association: [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

Sources:

John McConaghy, MD, et al. "Outpatient treatment of systolic heart failure." *American Family Physician* 70 (2004): 2157-2164. "Heart failure." *JAMA* 287 (2002): 676

**GOAL LINE: Every smoker** has a top, personal reason for kicking tobacco. Keep that reason in sight to avoid relapse.

[Page 6]  
SAFETY

## **Gym Hygiene Preventing Infection**

**You can never be too clean when it comes to gym hygiene.** Since the germ exchange rate is high from sharing equipment and facilities, you can get more than just a good workout if you're not careful.

One of the biggest concerns is the bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*), or Staph, which thrive in warm, moist environments. Although these bacteria do not always result in infection in carriers, they can be transferred when they enter broken skin, the eyes, nose or mouth. Some types of Staph, called methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), can cause serious infections, and have been found in gyms. Gyms can also spread fungal and viral infections. **Be smart – don't give germs room to roost:**

- **Wipe down exercise equipment before and after workouts**, including weights, elliptical machines, treadmills and other shared items. Use disinfectant wipes or spray (if the gym doesn't provide it, ask).
- **Avoid communal yoga mats.** Bring your own.
- **Shower and change clothes** immediately after working out.
- **Never share towels** or other personal items, such as razors.
- **Wear flip-flops** in gym showers, saunas and steam rooms. Never walk barefoot.
- **Avoid touching your nose**, mouth, or eyes after using exercise equipment.
- **If you have a cut**, scratch, scrape or bad bruise, don't use the sauna or whirlpool.
- **If you're sick**, avoid close contact with others or stay home.

Sources:

"What you can do to prevent infection." Partnership for Healthcare. Accessed on 10/28/08 at <http://www.partnershipforhealthcare.org/resources/factsheets/preventinfection.pdf>.

"Don't Skimp on the Gym Because of MRSA." Reuters.com, 9/15/08. Accessed on 10/28/08 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS58715+15-Sep-2008+BW20080915>.

## **Going Up? Going Down?**

### **Ride elevators and escalators with care.**

**The number of North Americans who ride elevators and escalators each day: 325 million passengers on elevators and another 245 million on escalators.** It's easy to take these machines for granted, but keep safety in mind by reviewing these myths from the Elevator Escalator Safety Foundation.

**Myth: It's okay to walk on escalators when they're not moving.** No, it's not. When stopped, the steps are not at the height needed to walk normally. You can easily fall or trip, so avoid use, even if there's no sign saying "Keep off."

**Myth: There's little precaution needed when riding an escalator.** Respect an escalator the way you would any machine weighing several tons. Ride holding the handrail, facing forward, standing up, with your feet in the center of the step.

**Myth: Elevators are supported by one cable.** Several steel cables hold up an elevator.

**Myth: An elevator stuck between floors can fall, so passengers should try to get out.** Never leave the car unless you are helped by trained rescue personnel. Remain calm, and use the phone, intercom or alarm to summon help.

**Did you know?** An elevator that's too full will not fall – instead, it usually doesn't move, the doors remain open, and a buzzer rings until the load is lightened.

Sources:

Ashley H. Rains. "Riding Elevators and Escalators Safely." EESF. Accessed 10/30/08 at <http://eesf.org/resources/index.html>.

"Elevator Escalator Safety Foundation Celebrates ..." EESF (Elevator World), 4/08. Accessed 10/30/08. At <http://eesf.org/resources/index.html>

"How to ride safely on elevators, escalators and moving walks." EESF. Accessed 10/30/08 at <http://eesf.org/resources/index.html>.

## Veggie Trivia

**How many of these facts do you know?** They offer ways to maximize the flavors, freshness and nutritional value of your vegetables.

**Tomatoes:** Ripen and store them in a cool (not cold) place out of the sun. *Tip:* Refrigeration weakens their flavor.

**Green vegetables:** They are most flavorful when they turn bright green in cooking; color dulls when overcooked.

**Mushrooms:** Store loosely in closed paper bags (not plastic); refrigerate, but not in a crisper. *Tip:* Brush off dirt, rather than rinse, before storing.

**Carrots:** Before refrigerating in plastic, snip off their green tops, which draw moisture and cause wilting.

**Onions and potatoes:** Avoid those with sprouts or any sign of moisture, which means decay. *Tip:* Don't store them together as onions speed spoilage.

**Potatoes:** Store them cool and dry in paper bags. *Tip:* A medium potato has just 88 calories.

**Peas (in a pod):** Best when young and small. Pop out of their pods and use raw in salads, lightly steamed or in risottos. How easy!

**Herbs:** To extend freshness, roll them in dry paper towels, pack in plastic bags and store refrigerated for a week or so.

**Cruciferous** (broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage): All are rich in nutrients and fiber. *Tip:* When cooking, sprinkle them lightly with salt and pepper to reduce odor.

**Avocado:** It's actually a fruit, probably the only one high in fat – but it's heart-healthy monounsaturated fat. *Tip:* Mash a few slices and whip into a vinaigrette (olive oil and vinegar).

**All vegetables:** Most should not be washed before storing – the added moisture may cause decay.

### Frozen or canned vs. fresh?

There is usually little nutritional difference. In fact, most canned produce is packed at its peak and may contain more nutrients. *Tip:* Rinse and drain canned vegetables that have added salt.

[Cutline]

**Enjoy more vegetables, especially now during Nutrition Month.**

Source:

*The Wellness Encyclopedia of Food and Nutrition*/University of California at Berkeley (Random House 1992). The American Dietetic Association's Complete Food & Nutrition Guide (Chronimed Publishing, 1996).

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH

### Tex-Mex Potato Frittata

**A *frittata* is a sort-of omelet that combines any vegetables, cheeses or meats on hand. Enjoy it for breakfast, lunch or dinner.**

1 tbsp canola oil  
12 oz. frozen Southwest style hash browns  
½ cup chopped red bell pepper  
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro  
1 tomato, coarsely chopped  
16 oz. egg substitute  
¾ cup reduced fat shredded Mexican style cheese

**1** Heat oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add hash browns. Spread in an even layer; press down lightly with spatula. Cook 6-7 minutes or until golden brown on bottom.

**2** Reduce heat to medium-low. Top potato layer with red pepper, cilantro and tomatoes. Pour egg substitute evenly over mixture in skillet. Cook for 10-12 minutes or until eggs are almost set.

**3** Heat oven broiler. To protect skillet handle, wrap with aluminum foil. Broil frittata 4-6 inches from heat for 3 minutes; watch it closely. Remove and top with cheese; broil 30 seconds or until cheese is melted. Cut into wedges. *Buon appetito!*

**Serving suggestions:** Top with salsa and avocado slice as desired.

**MAKES 6 (generous) SLICES.**

**Per serving: 145 calories 6.5g protein 4.8g fat 1.7g saturated fat 7.5mg cholesterol 11g carbs 1.3g fiber 390mg sodium**

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**GOAL LINE: To lose 10 pounds in a year** cut 100 calories (a medium cookie or glass of wine) each day; double the loss with a daily mile walk.

## **Q: Drugs to help smokers quit?**

**A: Nicotine in tobacco is a very addictive drug** — but several effective medications can help you stop smoking. In some cases these medicines may double your chances of quitting for good.

**First step:** You can increase your chances for successfully quitting by working with your health care provider. Discuss the pros and cons of various drugs to decide what's best for you.

**Nicotine replacement:** Over-the-counter nicotine gum or patches and prescription nasal sprays or inhalers can help reduce nicotine cravings.

**Oral medication:** A prescription antidepressant, *bupropion*, eases cravings by altering brain chemicals. It may also help slow weight gain.

*Varenicline*, another prescription product, binds more strongly to body cells than does nicotine. This helps to diminish cravings and lessen the enjoyment of smoking. In studies comparing the oral medications, varenicline was more effective at stopping smoking, but bupropion was better at preventing weight gain.

Be sure to ask your provider about the potential side effects of the medicines and their proper use.

Source:

“Drugs for tobacco dependence.” Treatment Guidelines from The Medical Letter 6 (2008): 61-66.

## **Q: Energy drinks good for you?**

**A: Energy drinks promise enhanced athletic performance** and a quick boost. But are they healthy? And do they live up to their claims?

Despite the hype, energy drinks are little more than thirst quenchers high in caffeine and sugar, like typical soft drinks. Caffeine in heavy doses can be dehydrating and interfere with sleep, especially if you are caffeine-sensitive, which seems to defeat the purpose of an “energy” drink.

Some fans of energy drinks mix them with alcohol – an unhealthy and potentially dangerous combination that could raise heartbeat and blood pressure, and lead to heart attack in some individuals. Energy drinks to relieve the effects of alcohol? Like coffee, they won't help – even if you feel sober, your blood alcohol level remains the same.

**Need a boost?** Take a walk, drink water, skim or low-fat milk, and eat a healthy snack high in fiber.

Sources:

“Energy drinks: Do they really give me energy?” Mayo Clinic, 4/28/08. Accessed 10/23/08 at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/energy-drinks/AN01303>

“Energy drinks: Are they bad for my heart?” Mayo Clinic, 8/10/07. Accessed 10/23/08 at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/energy-drinks/AN01630>.

“Energy Drinks Linked To Risk-taking Behaviors Among College Students.” University of Buffalo, 7/25/08. Accessed 10/23/08 at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/07/080724150438.htm>.

“Energy Drinks May Pose Risks For People With High Blood Pressure, Heart Disease.” *Science Daily*, 11/6/07. Accessed 10/23/08 at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/11/071106092009.htm>.

## QUICK STUDIES

**Are food allergies increasing in U.S. kids?** In 2007, the CDC found that 1 in 26 kids have food allergies, up 18% from a decade ago. Food allergy symptoms include vomiting, skin rashes, and breathing problems. Most common triggers: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (walnuts, pecans), fish, soy and wheat. Food allergies are more common in children than in adults; many children outgrow them, but a significant number remain allergic for life.

Source:

"CDC Study Finds 3 Million U.S. Children Have Food or Digestive Allergies." CDC, 10/22/08. Accessed on 11/7/08 at [www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2008/r081022.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2008/r081022.htm).

**A National Cancer Institute study** found that selenium and vitamin E taken alone or together for an average of 5 years did not appear to help prevent prostate cancer. The study, published last year, involved more than 35,000 men age 50-plus. Researchers caution that this is an early review of the data; they will continue to monitor the participants. Prostate cancer is the second most common type of cancer in American men. In 2008, prostate cancer was diagnosed in an estimated 186,320 men and resulted in 28,660 deaths.

Source:

“Review of Prostate Cancer Prevention Study Shows No Benefit for Use of Selenium and Vitamin E Supplements.” NCI, 10/27/08. Accessed 11/11/08 at [www.cancer.gov/newscenter/pressreleases/selectresults2008](http://www.cancer.gov/newscenter/pressreleases/selectresults2008).